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ROLLING STONE

WHITE HOUSE WHIZ KIDS

Running the Country with Hamilton Jordan and Jody Powell
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VAN MORRISON
Exclusive Interview
 By Cameron Crowe

PLUTONIUM FOR SALE
The Nuclear Black Market
 By Howard Kohn



TWELVE HOT PHOTOGRAPHERS
Taking Pictures for a Living, 1977
STEPHANE GRAPPELLI
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Crystal Gayle: at home in the middle of the road

By Martha Hume

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT — On the stage of the Bushnell Auditorium, Crystal Gayle, named this year's Best Female Vocalist by the West Coast-based Academy of Country Music, was doing a version of "Heat Wave" at full tilt. She followed with a bluesy "Baby on My Mind," and finally finished her 35-minute set with a series of country chart hits. Then she yielded the stage to Billy "Crash" Craddock, who launched into a medley of Fifties rock 'n' roll.

That's country music these days, and Crystal Gayle, the 22-year-old younger sister of Loretta Lynn, typifies the style—or non-style—as well as any woman in the business. The sisters seem to have little more in common than the same two parents. Loretta was married and gone from home when Crystal was born, and after four years in Butcher Hollow, Kentucky, Crystal moved with the family to Wabash, Indiana, where she grew up listening to Brenda Lee and Leslie Gore rather than the Grand Ole Opry. Crystal dismisses the difference between herself and Loretta with a simple, "We grew up in different places."

Crystal is as introverted as her sister is outgoing. Even onstage,

'In country you make a lot of fans that are just gonna stick with you all the time.'

she moves very little as she sings, and her between-song patter is almost nonexistent. She's scrubbed-clean pretty, with deep blue eyes and a nine-year growth of shiny brown hair, and generally has the air of the good girl in school. Or, as one observer of her show remarked: "She's the kind of girl I'd like to push in a mud puddle."

Nonetheless, Crystal grew up wanting to be a singer. In junior high, she says, she played guitar and sang folk [Cont. on 30]

Crystal Gayle

[Cont. from 28] music—especially Peter, Paul and Mary songs. Later, she turned to other styles and began performing in public.

"I would sing for—what do you call it—Moose Lodge, that type of thing," says Crystal. "I'd sing 'Hello Dolly' and 'Summertime'—all different types of songs."

She was drawn to Nashville because of her sister's presence there and fell into country music naturally. Her stage name of Crystal (her real name is Brenda) was given her by Loretta, who had seen it on a Krystal Hamburger stand. "I didn't really care what I was called," says Crystal, "'cause I was gettin' to record."


Her very first single, "I've Cried (The Blue Right out of My Eyes)," went to Number 23 on the country charts in 1970. She toured for a while with Loretta, played country fairs and festivals and appeared on Jim Ed Brown's *Country Place* TV show before signing with United Artists in 1973.

"I didn't really consider getting in the business until I got with UA," says Crystal. "I didn't know what I was doing. I was a little younger at the time and didn't know the ropes or if this was the career I wanted. I knew it was hard and I had to make a decision that I had to hit the road or forget it and stay home. I decided to try it."

United Artists paired Crystal with Allen Reynolds, a producer who has such a rigid style that his songs often sound as if they came off an assembly line. Nonetheless, Allen Reynolds productions get to be hits with great regularity.

So far, she's hit the country charts with "Restless"; "Wrong Road Again"; "This Is My Year for Mexico"; "I'll Get Over You," her first number one; and "I'd Do It All Over Again." Her third album, *Crystal*, has been on *Billboard's* country album chart for over 35 weeks. In 1975 the Academy of Country Music named her Most Promising Female Vocalist, and this year she beat her sister in the "best" category of the same organization. Her last two singles indicated an emerging style nearer to MOR than hard country; but Crystal says she still wants to be classified as a country act.

And so, in true country music tradition, Crystal is launching a fan club. Jim Davidson, the club's president, was at the Hartford show, consulting between sets with Crystal on photographs, membership cards and the purchase of a mimeograph machine on which to turn out letters from Crystal Gayle.

"I do want to be country, but I wouldn't mind having cross-over songs," she says. "But country is my roots: in country you make a lot of fans that are just gonna stick with you all the time. In pop, you can be up one minute and down the other." 

Crystal Gayle: she and sister Loretta Lynn have little more in common than the same two parents.

